

To Whom It May Concern:

As a practicing social worker in the medical field for the past 30 years and a member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Illinois Chapter, I am submitting comments for your consideration regarding the state's Path to Transformation Concept Paper for an 1115 Waiver for Illinois Medicaid.

**Re: Behavioral Health Expansion and Integration**

I would strongly recommend establishing a rules process for PA 95-518, the social work Medicaid reimbursement law, which will enable behavioral health services to be more readily available on a community level. Public Act 95-518 authorizes (but does not mandate) reimbursement to licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) for Medicaid-eligible services in all settings, but to date the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) has chosen not to implement the Act.

**Re: Loan Repayment**

I would strongly request that social work be included in the list of health care professions eligible for the state loan repayment program. Alleviating some of the financial burden associated with obtaining a master's level social work degree (necessary for most positions in health care settings) will foster a **stable** and **competent** social work workforce. Loan repayment would also be an incentive for social workers to practice in medically underserved areas.

With the growing burden facing college graduates as a result of debt accumulated from student loans and other educational costs, the implications are vastly different for those who choose careers like social work where salaries are notoriously lower, making social workers, one group of professionals especially burdened by educational debt.

**Re: Workforce Training (section 4C, p. 13)**

I strongly request that social work be included in the list of health care professions eligible to receive workforce training grants. With social work playing a critical role in the implementation of state Medicaid reform, we need to build and sustain our workforce capacity. Funding for training and continuing education, particularly in the areas of gerontology and chronic care management, will help this effort.

I am a social worker with 30 years of experience in the medical field with the past 15 of those years specializing in oncology social work, and I can assure you that social workers have become leaders in the field of psychosocial oncology. Social workers are trained in a systems approach so they understand the micro and macro impacts on a system. Social workers play a key role in educating and orienting patients and their families to the health care system and the expected course of treatment. Social workers are a critical member of the interdisciplinary team who typically develop strong bonds with the patient, family and health care provider/staff. Staff support is an inherent component of the social work role, given the high levels of stress in the delivery of care to patients/clients. All hospitals/cancer centers and

medical clinics that employ social workers strive for excellence in providing care to their patients and their families; social workers are an essential part of that team.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Candi Gray MSW, LCSW, OSW-C  
Community Cancer Center  
407 E. Vernon Avenue  
Normal, IL 61761  
309.451.8500  
309.451.2217 Direct  
309.451.2200 Fax  
E-mail: [cgray@cancercenter.org](mailto:cgray@cancercenter.org)  
Website: [www.cancercenter.org](http://www.cancercenter.org)